Rep. Braley's Plain Language Act would require government to write tax forms, websites, and other documents in simple, easy-to-understand language. **Washington, DC -** Today Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) re-introduced the Plain Language Act, a bill that would require the federal government to write documents like tax returns, federal college aid applications, websites, and Veterans Administration forms in simple, easy-to-understand language.

Braley first introduced the Plain Language Act in 2007. That bill attracted bipartisan support and passed the House on April 14, 2008-the eve of Tax Day-by a vote of 376-1. The Senate never acted on the bill.

"As Congress debates the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act this week, it's appropriate to renew the effort to make government documents easy to understand so people can track how their taxpayer dollars are being spent," Braley said. "Writing government documents in plain language will increase government accountability and will save Americans time and money.

"Anyone who's done their own taxes knows the headache of trying to understand pages and pages of confusing forms and instructions. There is no reason why the federal government can't write these forms and other public documents in a way we can all understand. We need to pass this bill to make it easier for Americans to work with and understand their government."

The Plain Language Act would require the federal government to write all new publications, forms, and publicly distributed documents in a "clear, concise, well-organized" manner that follows the best practices of plain language writing.

The Federal Plain Language Guidelines provide an outline for these best practices. According to the guidelines, plain language documents should, for example:

- Use short, simple words;
- Use "you" and other pronouns to speak directly to readers;
- Use short sentences and paragraphs;
- Avoid legal, foreign, and technical jargon;
- Avoid double negatives.

For a full description of the Federal Plain Language Guidelines, see http://www.plainlanguage.gov   .

A copy of Braley's *Plain Language Act* is attached to this message.

Examples of Plain Language in Use: Before and After

Here are three before-and-after examples of how plain language was applied to federal documents to make them easier to understand. For more examples, see http://www.plainlanguage.gov   .

Example #1: Medicare Fraud Letter (click link)

http://www.plainlanguage.gov/examples/before_after/medicarefraudltr.cfm

Example #2: FDA drug warning label (click link)

http://www.plainlanguage.gov/examples/before_after/overctrdrug.pdf

Example #3: IRS form (click links)

Before: http://www.plainlanguage.gov/examples/before_after/CP2000_before.pdf

After: http://www.plainlanguage.gov/examples/before_after/CP2000_after.pdf

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